

Stow Heath Primary School

Hill Road, Portobello, Willenhall, West Midlands WV13 3TT

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is an improving school. All leaders have worked with drive and ambition to the benefit of staff and pupils.
- The commitment of senior leaders and staff results in the majority of pupils doing well in a range of subjects.
- Leaders' and governors' checks on the school's performance are accurate. The work of leaders to improve the school is effective in bringing about improvements.
- Pupils in this school are safe because there is a strong culture of safeguarding.
- The work in pupils' current and most recently completed books shows that progress is improving in most subject areas.
- The large majority of pupils behave well and have a good attitude to their learning. However, a few pupils do not participate as fully as they can or work diligently to make stronger progress.
- Some pupils' understanding of how sentences are constructed limits their progress, particularly when writing longer pieces of work.
- The early years helps children to get off to a good start in their education. Children who need to catch up are making rapid progress from their starting points.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a result, their attendance is in line with the national average.
- The environment of the school reflects all aspects of the curriculum. The learning displays celebrate the topics taught at the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- A few of the most able and least able pupils do not do as well as expected. These pupils are not consistently challenged to apply their knowledge of English to reach the highest standards or catch up where needed, particularly in writing.
- Pupils are engaged by effective teaching and do well as a result.
- There are regular checks on the progress that pupils make. This ensures that pupils get the support that they need. However, there is still scope to focus these checks more on some of the most able pupils to help them all to reach their expected learning targets.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing by:
 - making sure that teachers use what they know about pupils' knowledge and understanding to plan learning activities that meet their needs, especially for the most able and least able pupils
 - making sure that pupils are challenged to apply their written skills consistently well
 - ensuring that the checks made on pupils' work lead to consistent improvements, especially in sentence construction and handwriting.

- Sustain improvements to teaching and learning by making sure that:
 - leaders develop staff knowledge and understanding of the school's system of teaching writing
 - leaders and staff effectively track the progress of pupils capable of reaching the highest standards.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- There have been good improvements to the school since its previous inspection. Pupils now make good progress. This is because the headteacher, governors and other senior leaders hold staff to account for the progress that pupils in their care make.
- Governors take an active role, both supporting and challenging staff to be the best that they can be. This means that the knowledge that governors have about the school is accurate, so governors have an effective view of what the school does well and its performance.
- The school's mission statement aspires for the school community to 'shine like a star'. As a result, the drive and ambition that leaders have for improving the school ensure that improvements are made in those areas that the school knows could still be better.
- Middle leaders have developed their roles since the previous inspection. Their involvements in the checks that are made on the school's work have added to the strength in the leadership team. As a result, middle leaders, therefore, are able to support staff to develop their teaching skills.
- Many staff contribute to the programme of professional development in the school. Developing the school team has resulted in greater consistency and provided opportunities for teachers to demonstrate that they meet their professional standards. However, there has been less focus on supporting staff knowledge and understanding of the school's system for the teaching of writing. Consequently, some of the most able and least able pupils do not make as much progress as others.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is well planned throughout the school. Consequently, the pupils enjoy the range of topics and their views on the curriculum are positive. Across the school, a range of other activities, including visits out of school and extra-curricular opportunities, are provided. These opportunities help to enhance pupils' learning and support their good progress.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. This is because the school's curriculum contributes to pupils' understanding of the diverse community in which they live. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on the choices they make in how they treat others support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the school. For example, 'diversity days' help to foster a harmonious and mutually respected community.
- The school physical education (PE) and sports premium is used well. The number of pupils taking part in at least one extra-curricular club is good and engagement is high. The use of a proportion of this funding to target pupils in developing resilience, courage and determination ensures that pupils are ready to learn.
- The school uses the pupil premium effectively, to diminish the difference between the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils at the school and other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged. For example, leaders provide additional staff to accelerate progress by targeting groups and individuals for intervention. The pupils make faster progress because of this, and their progress is improving. A phonic initiative in the early years has helped to diminish the difference in attainment between the disadvantaged pupils

and other pupils.

- Leaders routinely track the progress that pupils make from their starting points. This means that, where pupils need to catch up, they can be targeted easily for effective support to accelerate their progress. However, the tracking is less developed for those who are capable of reaching the highest standards, and so staff are less clear about who can be targeted to attain highly.
- Special educational needs funding is used effectively to provide help for those who need it. The progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well tracked. The school provides an area in school to support vulnerable pupils so that their work is well matched to their needs. Consequently, pupils in the 'Rocket' group make faster progress and, where possible, re-join the year groups that they are from.

Governance of the school

- Governors effectively hold the school and its leaders to account for the progress that pupils make. There is both challenge and support for leaders and staff across the school.
- The frequent visits that are made to check on the work of the school help governors with their accurate self-evaluation. As a result, the governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and can identify where decisions have been made to improve practice. This means that they know the impact of these actions and so are clear in ensuring that funding is used effectively. For example, the link governors responsible for the pupil premium funding have effective oversight of its use, resulting in these pupils making faster progress.
- Governors have taken steps to utilise the good practice from other local schools. This has led to the governors themselves continuing on their journey to improve by working with other institutions on effective governance. As a result, the governing body committee structure is focused on school improvement. Records of the work of governors show good levels of challenge.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. As a result of training, staff take their responsibility for looking after all pupils seriously. The regular training updates that staff receive help to keep them well informed and, because of this, pupils are safe. The school works well to support those pupils and families who require it.
- The checks made to help keep pupils safe are carried out effectively. For example, the recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with children are robust. Recording and reporting of concerns about pupils is carried out well so that pupils receive the help they need.
- The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, the 'digital ambassadors' programme supports the pupils in understanding the dangers of the internet and how to manage their risks while on line.
- The safety and well-being of children in the early years are well managed and the early

years welfare requirements are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have high expectations. They have supported teachers to have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Consequently, the quality of teaching is now consistently good and pupils' progress is rapidly improving.
- The classrooms provide a good range of resources to support learning, and the range of pupils' work on display, particularly for the wider curriculum, celebrates the high expectations of the school.
- Teachers use intervention and extra adults well for those who need to catch up. A range of senior leaders and teaching assistants focus on improving outcomes to accelerate pupils' progress. This supports the middle-ability pupils in making faster progress.
- Phonics is taught well. As a result, by the end of key stage 1, the vast majority of pupils have a secure knowledge of the sounds that letters make and use this to read well.
- Pupils are applying their phonics skills well in reading. Pupils are able to tackle challenging words by using their knowledge of the sounds that letters make and so are able to read a range of books. A few pupils lack the range of other strategies to help them to make even faster progress in reading.
- The application of phonics in pupils' writing is leading to faster progress. However, the school's programme for teaching writing is less embedded, and consequently teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are inconsistent. This is particularly the case for those capable of reaching the highest standards in writing.
- Relationships in classrooms and around school are strong. Pupils settle to work quickly, and their focus supports pupils in making good progress. Occasionally, pupils do not engage as fully as they might in their learning or are not as diligent in remaining on task by avoiding distractions.
- Staff are consistent in their application of the school's policy on marking and feedback.
- Staff expectations of presentation and handwriting are not always consistent across the school, and this limits the pupils' ability to attain the highest standards in writing.
- The most able pupils and least able pupils are usually challenged, but this is not consistent across the school. Occasionally, the match of work to pupils' needs is not precise enough and prevents them attaining the highest standard or catching up.
- The number of parents' responses to the online survey, Parent View, and free text survey were small and so a wider range of views were obtained from school surveys and discussion with parents. The range of surveys from pupils, staff and parents that were scrutinised confirmed that the large majority believe that pupils are taught well and make good progress.
- Assessments made to inform the progress that pupils make are accurate. Judgements have been supported by a wide range of moderation opportunities both in school and through other local collaborations. The tracking of these assessments is systematic but

it does not help teachers and leaders in knowing about the progress of every group. This means that in some lessons the challenge for the most able pupils is not as sharp as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and work well together. They enjoy additional responsibility for helping others to make positive behaviour choices, for example, during transition times between the classroom and collective worship.
- Pupils said that they feel safe, and this view was supported by the views of staff. Parents too spoke positively to inspectors about the care for their children. One parent in a group who spoke to inspectors said: 'I love the school. The teachers are amazing! Loving and caring and go the extra mile.'
- The school takes effective steps to deal with any issues of bullying or discriminatory language. Governors are aware of the trends in behaviour and monitor this aspect carefully. This has ensured that the school is held to account for its work to improve this aspect.
- Pupils' understanding of the importance of promoting fundamental British values is good. Key stage 2 pupils could talk positively about the importance of tolerance and democracy and so are prepared for life in modern Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The recording and tracking of behaviour incidents show a decline and pupils' behaviour over time is improving well.
- While there have been exclusions, the school has made considerable effort to prevent these from happening. The school has also successfully re-integrated pupils from other settings, who have themselves been permanently excluded.
- Pupils are courteous and polite around the school. At lunchtime, there are opportunities for pupils to self-regulate their behaviour choices. This is having a positive impact on the number of lunchtime incidents.
- Pupils behave well overall, although in some lessons a small minority of pupils lose focus without direct supervision of adults.
- Attendance and punctuality are good and compare favourably with the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is also low.
- The school's checks on those who are absent from school are robust. This has ensured that pupils are safe when not at school. The school is not complacent and has struck a good balance of challenge and support for families to ensure that they send their children to school regularly and on time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The most recent teacher assessment shows an improvement in attainment and progress across the school. Pupils now make good progress.
- The school's result in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average but, because of the current good teaching, pupils are using their phonics well to read and write. By the end of Year 2, the majority of pupils have caught up and are secure in their letters and sounds.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 is in line with the national average.
- Last year's national test results and teacher assessments for key stages 1 and 2 show that too few of the most able pupils reached the higher standards. However, current pupils are making good progress, and standards are rising.
- Pupils' workbooks show that current progress is improving from each pupil's individual starting point. All groups of pupils are making good progress. For instance, in writing, pupils' work shows that they progress from simple sentences to expanded noun phrases with a range of conjunctions. However, there is scope to improve still further the attainment of the most able pupils in writing, so they all reach the highest standards.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well and are targeted through additional support. Records of pupil progress meetings show that these pupils are making rapid progress and diminishing the difference between them and other pupils nationally.
- The progress of the most able pupils and the progress of those pupils who need to catch up are also improving but not yet consistent across the school. Additional support is ensuring that more pupils in each year group are moving toward the highest standard or are catching up.
- In subject areas beyond English and mathematics, pupils are making good progress in their knowledge and understanding of, for instance, science and in their application of skills. Opportunities to write at length are developing, but these are not yet consistent in every year group.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress because of the close match of work to their needs. The teacher responsible for special educational needs uses additional funding well to accelerate pupils' progress.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a good start in the early years. Most of the children join the school's Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. Good-quality teaching and support are helping the children to make good progress.
- The school has effectively targeted support for all Nursery children. As a result, a higher proportion of children enter the Reception year with skills typical of their age and stage of development.
- Language development has been a high focus in the school, and the development of

speech through a rich learning environment has led to stronger progress. Opportunities to write are evident across the both the Nursery and Reception settings, but sometimes the resources available do not encourage all the children to engage fully with each activity for sustained periods of time.

- Relationships between children and adults are good, particularly in developing social interaction and children's readiness to learn.
- Mathematics is taught well. Sometimes the unavailability of practical resources limits the progress of the lower-attaining children.
- The curriculum is well matched to children's needs and interests and, as a result, there are frequent opportunities to develop language and writing skills.
- Assessments of children's learning and development are accurate, and the school's 'learning journeys' show a good range of evidence that clearly demonstrates how well the children are learning. Leaders use this knowledge well to match the support given to individuals and groups.
- There is good leadership of early years provision. Leaders are using their good knowledge of children to target more children to reach or exceed a good level of development by the end of the Reception year. As a result, the children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The welfare requirements are met in full. The staff are well trained to ensure that children are safe and can thrive in clean and stimulating areas.
- Parents and carers are involved in contributing to their child's learning journey. Home visits carried out by staff prior to children starting in the Nursery ensure that parents' views about what their child can and cannot do inform their next steps in learning. Parents are also encouraged to share their child's home learning experiences and these are captured in 'proud clouds'.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 104323 |
| Local authority | Wolverhampton |
| Inspection number | 10032599 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 498 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Kevin King |
| Headteacher | Vivienne Bunce |
| Telephone number | 01902 558820 |
| Website | http://www.stowheathprimaryschool.co.uk/ |
| Email address | stowheathprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18–19 March 2015 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Stow Heath is above average in size for a primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is above the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a range of backgrounds. The largest of these groups are represented by pupils of Indian, White and Black Caribbean heritages.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is just above the national average, whereas the percentage of pupils who do not speak English as their first language is just below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high

and nearly double the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons, of which three were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteachers. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and other activities, for example, to look at pupils' books and talk to pupils.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, staff, parents and groups of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to two members of the governing body, including the chair and a representative from the local authority.
- There were three responses to the free text parent survey and four responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors used other surveys that the school had undertaken to enable inspectors to take account of parents' views.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including monitoring of teaching, governing body minutes, improvement plans and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors considered the current progress demonstrated in pupils' books.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures including those in relation to special educational needs, pupil premium funding, PE and sports premium funding, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Richard Kentish, lead inspector | Ofsted inspector |
| Brenda Titley | Ofsted inspector |
| Sarah Ashley | Ofsted inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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